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MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON

CLASSICAL ART

GRAECO-ROMAN GALLERY

SCULPTURE

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CLASSICAL ART

Graeco-Roman Gallery:
Sculpture

Department of Classical Art
Gallery Guide no. 8

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CLASSICAL ART.

Graeco-Roman Gallery.

Sculpture.

(The sculptures in this gallery are described in order from left to right, beginning at the northwest corner beside the doorway leading into the Archaic Room).

Portrait head of a girl.

The face, with large, wide-open eyes and thick lips - suggesting a strain of negro blood - has a life-like and rather sad expression. A braid encircles the crown of the head; below it the hair is arranged in a series of large, flat waves held in place by a round fillet. From the plastic rendering of the eye-brows and the sharp carving of the lids the work is to be dated toward the end of the first century A. D.

Relief. A woman with a garland.

Holes for metal fastenings for attaching this block to others and the way in which the sides are bevelled indicate that it formed part of a large polygonal base or altar. Carved in high relief on the face of this block is the lower half of the figure of a woman, holding before her a garland of ivy leaves and berries tied at intervals with a fillet. She wears a long Ionic chiton of thin material falling in crinkled, vertical lines to her feet, which are without sandals, and over it a cloak of heavier material reaching to her ankles. The upper portion of the cloak is doubled over and arranged in conventional zigzag folds, imitating archaic Greek work. This archaistic style of drapery combined with the free pose of the left leg and with the realistic Roman treatment of the garland is typical of the neo-Attic reliefs, of which this is an unusually fine example, produced by Greek sculptors working in Rome toward the end of the first century B. C.

Portrait bust of a Roman.

This head has been identified as Corbulo, the general of Nero's army in the East, but the resemblance to the authenticated portrait of Corbulo is slight. It represents a man between forty and fifty years of age, with a lean face, high forehead and aquiline nose. The

treatment of the hair and the form of the bust show that it dates from about the middle of the first century A. D.

Torso of a statue of Aphrodite.

Ideal female loveliness united with the unconscious majesty of a divine being were embodied by Praxiteles in his celebrated statue of Aphrodite made for the Knidians about the middle of the fourth century B. C. In adaptations by later imitators the dignity of the goddess disappears, and the subject becomes simply a representation of physical charms. This torso belongs among the finest of the numerous examples of a later type best known from the Venus dei Medici at Florence. The weight of the figure rested on the left leg, to which was attached a dolphin as a support; the left arm was slightly bent at the elbow and the left hand held in front of the body, while the right hand covered the breasts. The head was turned sharply toward the left shoulder. Attitude and gesture express consciousness of the spectator. Its exquisite refinement saves the figure from being sensuous.

Portrait head of a Roman.

Palombino, the exceedingly hard, close-grained limestone from which this head is carved, was a material used for sculpture during the last years of the Republic, in the third quarter of the first century B. C. The subject is an unknown man, old, smooth-shaven and bald. His powerful and aggressive character is realistically portrayed by the broad and massive skull, the large, firm jaw, the prominent eyes and the compressed lips.

Head of Augustus.

Gift of Mr. Edward W. Forbes.

More portraits of Augustus are extant than of any other Roman Emperor, - a fact not surprising in view of his long reign (27 B. C. - 14 A. D.) and of his great popularity throughout the Empire. This head shows him as a man of mature years; the cheek bones have become prominent, lines of age appear about the mouth, and the vertical wrinkles between the eyes are accentuated. The head is turned slightly to the right in a characteristic attitude. The contraction of the brow and the deep shadows round the eyes suggest the piercing glance with

which the Emperor liked to fancy that he inspired awe in all beholders. "The face is that of a man worn by ambitions and responsibilities, but still resolute in purpose."

(Compare another marble head of Augustus at the east end of the Gallery, and his portrait on coins in the Late Greek Room, Case 5, Section 4, second row).

Portrait bust of a Roman.

Gift of Mrs. Samuel D. Warren.

Since the Renaissance the person represented in the series of portraits to which this head belongs has been regarded as Caligula, but the identification is doubtful because the sculptured portraits are unlike those which appear on the coins of this Emperor. From his resemblance both to Agrippa and to Augustus it has been suggested that this youth is Caius Caesar (20 B. C. - 4 A. D.), the grandson and adopted son of Augustus. The material of this head is diorite.

Torso of a statue of a Roman in armor.

The figure represented an emperor or general in military dress; the head was cut from a separate block and inserted; the weight was supported on the left leg; the right arm was raised and probably held a spear; the left arm was lowered. The costume consists of a short tunic, visible only on the left upper arm, of a metal cuirass with leather lining, terminating at the bottom and at the armholes in broad, loose strips with fringed ends, and of a paludamentum or military cloak, a portion of which remains on the left shoulder. The cuirass is richly decorated in low relief; the principal design is a Palladium, or archaic image of Athena, with a winged Victory on each side of it. Above is a mask of Medusa. Each of the pendant plates, attached in two rows to the bottom of the cuirass, has an elaborate relief decoration. The rendering of certain details merely by incised lines shows that the sculptural decoration was supplemented by the use of color. The torso is of excellent workmanship and may be dated in the second half of the first century A. D.

(Compare the cast of the statue of Augustus, from Prima Porta, wearing a similar military costume, exhibited beside the entrance to the Lecture Hall on the ground floor).

Head of Augustus.

In contrast to the portrait of Augustus exhibited on the north wall of the Gallery, this admirably preserved head from a statue is not a realistic study of the Emperor at a certain definite period in his career, but rather an idealistic presentation of essential traits of his character. Like the gods he appears heroic and ageless.

Two fragments of a decorative relief.

The slabs belong at the two ends of a panel surrounded by a border of elaborately carved mouldings. At the outside is an astragalos (bead-and-reel), within this a leaf-and-dart moulding, next a band of oak leaves, and finally a second astragalos. On each panel is carved a griffin, the tail of which develops into an elaborate scroll of acanthus leaves. On the ground in front of the griffin at the right is the paw of a similar animal, serving perhaps as the foot of a tripod. The mouldings of the frame and the manner in which the relief is cut to secure decorative effect by a strong play of light and shade mark it as a work of the Flavian Period, about the end of the first century A. D.

Statue of a seated woman.

The figure and the seat, which is now missing, were either originally not carved from a single block, or were subsequently cut apart. There are numerous evidences of a second use of the statue. The front and back of the upper part of the body have been sawn in two and fastened together, and the left shoulder has been sawn off and replaced. Both arms and the head were made separately and attached; the preserved right arm is of inferior technique and probably dates from the time of the later use of the figure. The dress consists of three garments: a tunic revealed on the right shoulder where the sleeved Ionic chiton has slipped down a little, and over the chiton a himation of heavier material. There is a distinct suggestion of the style of the late fifth century B. C. in the treatment of the rippled surface of the thin, clinging chiton, and of the himation on the left side, which appears to be stirred by a breeze, but the execution of details of the drapery with its elaborate accidental folds, stiff and angular and producing a restless impression, is characteristic in sculpture of the Augustan Period.

Head of Tiberius.

As Tiberius was fifty-five years of age when he became Emperor after the death of Augustus in 14 A. D., this head which represents him as a comparatively young man may be dated toward the end of the first century B. C. The toga is drawn up over the hair in the manner customary for a priest officiating at a sacrifice. The work is a good example of early Imperial portraiture, well modeled and individualized without elaboration of realistic details.

Nude male torso.

This is a fair Roman copy of a statue in the style of Polykleitos, resembling the Doryphoros in type, but not closely enough to be regarded as a replica (compare the cast of the Doryphoros in the Court of Classical Casts, on the ground floor). The right leg supported the weight of the body; the action of the figure was directed toward the left, the left leg and arm swing in that direction, and the head was also turned toward that side.

Portrait bust of a Roman lady.

The resemblance of this head to a bust in the Louvre doubtfully identified as Octavia, the sister of Augustus, does not extend beyond a similarity in the coiffure which is arranged according to the style in vogue throughout the Augustan age. The features are those of a woman in middle life, of strong and straightforward character; the face with its high cheekbones, aquiline nose, large, firm mouth and powerful jaw suggests little of the beauty ascribed to Octavia by Plutarch, and bears no trace of family resemblance to Augustus. It must therefore be included among the numerous unidentified portraits of Roman women of this period.

Draped statue of a woman.

This type of draped female figure goes back to the fourth century B. C., and was frequently used, with variations in detail, throughout Hellenistic and Roman times. The present example is a Roman work, probably the portrait statue of a lady of the Claudian age in the first half of the first century A. D. The execution is unusually fresh and delicate, the modelling of

the right hand seen through the drapery being especially praiseworthy. The himation, or outer garment, is not differentiated from the chiton in texture; both are of equally thin material, clinging close to the body and producing small folds which are finely and sharply carved. The back of the statue is flat, and the drapery there is treated in a more summary manner.

Portrait bust of a Roman lady.

The intelligent, somewhat masterful and aristocratic features, the graceful poise of the head on the slender neck and the refined elegance of the coiffure distinguish this work from the mass of Roman portraits of the Antonine period, to which it belongs. The flesh is softly modelled, and details of the hair are rendered with unusual delicacy.

Pedestal of a candelabrum.

The pedestal is in the form of a triangular, truncated pyramid with an elaborately decorated base; on top are three rows of inverted acanthus leaves from which rose a standard for supporting lamps. At each of the lower corners is the forepart of a griffin with ibex horns and wings ending in curved tips. Between the griffins is a design of double spirals, lotus flowers and a palmette. The sides of the pedestal are panels sunk within a moulded frame; in each panel is the figure of a young athlete in high relief, standing on a projecting shelf. The figures are evidently inspired by statues in the round; the youth in front view on the lefthand panel is a copy of the Doryphoros of Polykleitos, and the heads of the two others show some resemblance to the Polykleitan type. The pedestal is a work of the neo-Attic school.

Statuette of an athlete.

The statuette is a Roman copy of a well-known type originated in the fourth century B. C. and frequently reproduced in later times not only in statues in the round, but also on Roman gems (compare the intaglio exhibited in the Late Greek Room, Case 7, Section 1, Row 6, Nos. 3-5). The nude young athlete stands with his weight resting on his right leg. His head is bent forward slightly to the left as he looks down at the strigil or flesh-scraper, the curved blade of which he is cleaning between the thumb and fingers

of his left hand. A tree trunk placed beside the left leg serves as a support for the figure.

Portrait bust of a Roman.

The bust is a life-size portrait of a bearded man of middle age, with long straggling locks of hair parted above the center of the forehead. The face, turned slightly toward the left, is long and narrow, and the cheeks are sunken. A paludamentum or military cloak is fastened by a circular brooch on the right shoulder. The bust is of the large form, including the breast and the beginning of the arms, which was introduced in the Antonine period. The work is probably to be dated in the latter part of the second century A. D.

Portrait head of a girl.

The head is a portrait of a little girl with full cheeks and a slightly smiling mouth. The arrangement of the hair dates the work in the first half of the first century A. D.

Head of Marcus Aurelius.

Lent by Mr. Richard Norton.

Marcus Aurelius, who belonged to an aristocratic Spanish family, was born in 121 A. D. This head portraying him as a young man is doubtless one of many made throughout the Empire on the occasion of his adoption at the age of seventeen by the Emperor Antoninus Pius, whom he succeeded on the throne in 161 A. D. Gentleness and kindness of heart, as well as something of the Stoic serenity which characterized Aurelius throughout his life are revealed in the youthful face.

Portrait bust of a little boy.

This is the head of a child four or five years old. The soft, rounded, infantile features are delicately modelled. The work dates from the first century A. D. Acid used at some time to clean the marble has given the surface a shiny appearance.

Small bronze statue of Herakles.

The dignity of the head, the modelling of the brow and the arrangement of the lion's-skin like a cloak hanging from the shoulder are reminiscent of fourth century Greek art and indicate that this bronze, as well

as other Graeco-Roman copies of the same type, was derived from a Greek original. The hero stands at rest with his weight on his left leg; his club was held in his left hand; his right hand is extended in a gesture of friendly greeting. This statue was found at Spoleto, in Umbria, and may have served as the cult-image worshipped there in Roman times in a small round temple near the ruins of which many bronze votive figurines of Herakles have been discovered.

Head of Aphrodite.

A Graeco-Roman work of Praxiteleian type.

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